

## FLEXIBILITY / STRETCHING EXERCISES

It is through static stretching that long-term flexibility benefits can effectively and safely be achieved.

Before stretching warm up for about five minutes with a jog around the gym or by jumping rope to increase body temperature. The warm-up can increase the safety and effectiveness of the flexibility program by increasing muscle temperature and circulation to the muscle. Warming up muscles in this way has also been shown to enhance nerve transmission and muscle metabolism. The warm-up also provides a psychological benefit to aid in the athlete's mental preparation for practice.

Following practice a cool-down jog or jump rope similar to the warm-up will allow for improved circulation of blood that has been concentrated on the exercising legs. Follow the cool-down with the same stretching routine to decrease the risk of postexercise stiffness, especially in the early days of the season when the athlete has yet to establish that plastic memory in the muscle.

### Application of Static Stretching

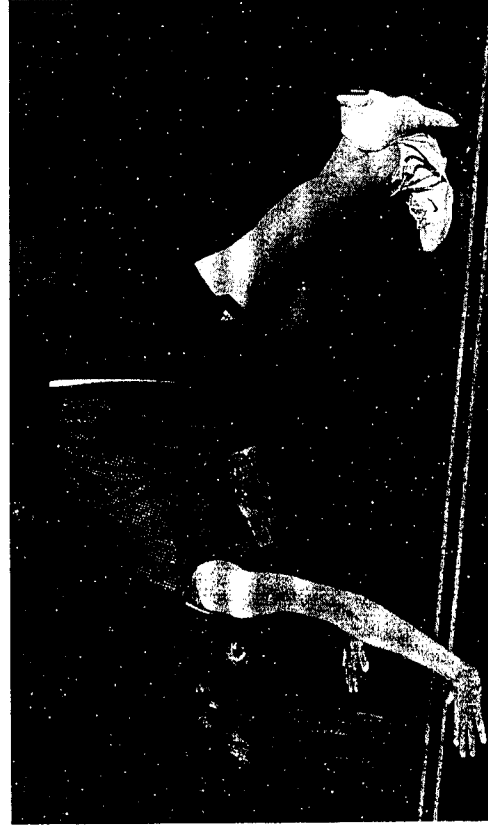
1. Stretching should be conducted before and after practices and games throughout the year following a warm-up and cool-down.
2. Start with a five-minute jog around the gym or jump rope for both the warm-up and cool-down.
3. Begin the stretching routine in a team formation determined by the coach. Some coaches prefer a circle, semicircle, columns or a more informal set up where the players choose their position, as long as all players can see the designated leaders. Players should be familiar with the techniques of each stretching exercise. Coaches should

walk around and ensure proper technique. Stretching should not be competitive—athletes with different abilities and should be encouraged to maintain proper form to achieve the best results. Compromising form will not produce results and can cause injury.

4. The athlete should gradually ease into the position without bouncing or stretching to the point of pain.
5. Hold the stretch position for a count of 15. This can be repeated 2 to 3 times.
6. Stretching is an exercise that requires normal respiration. Avoid the tendency to hold your breath.
7. Concentrate on the body part being stretched and the proper technique.

## Calves

While in the push-up position, raise the midsection. The foot of the leg being stretched should be kept on the floor with the heel slightly turned out. The knee should be kept straight but not locked. Place the other foot behind the heel of the leg being stretched to avoid sliding. Do not put the non-stretching foot over the Achilles tendon being stretched since this can impede blood flow in the muscle. Keep the foot of the leg being stretched straight or with the heel slightly turned out. Alternate legs after each count of 15 seconds.



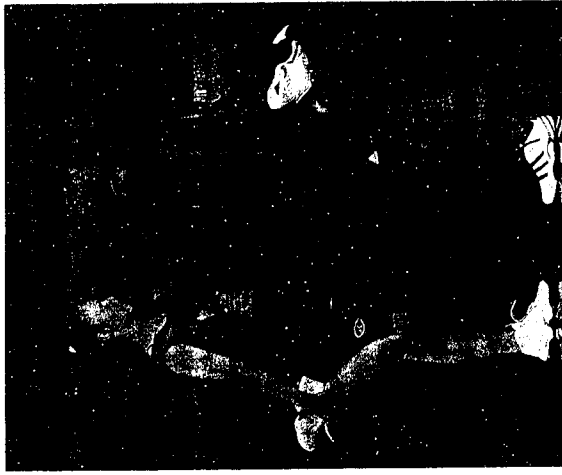
## Hamstrings

Lie flat on your back and lift the leg being stretched. Grab the shin keeping the leg straight but not locked. The leg of the non-stretching knee can be slightly bent. Do not lift the buttocks off the floor or twist the body to reach the leg. If you have difficulty reaching the leg use a towel or band to pull the leg back to the stretch position. This is a preferred method for stretching the hamstrings since it eliminates low back involvement. Alternate legs after each count of 15 seconds.



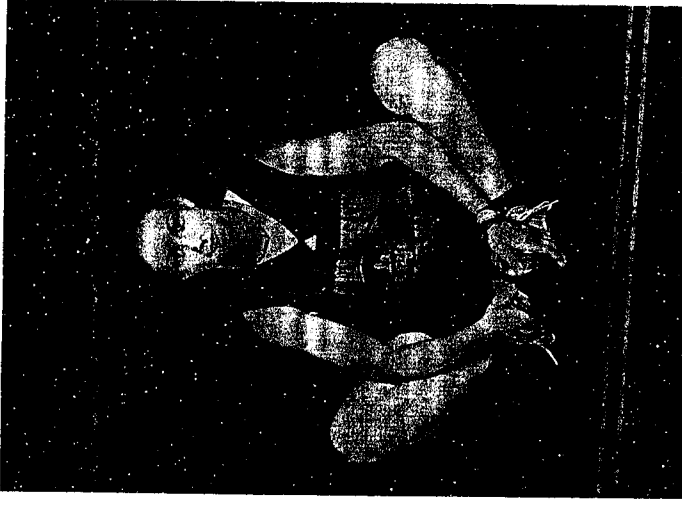
## Quadriceps

While facing each other, two players each grab the ankle of the leg being stretched while balancing with the other hand on the partner's shoulder. Place the heel of the foot close to the buttocks and slowly pull the leg back. Do not grab the foot; this can place stress on the foot and ankle. Alternate after each count of 15 seconds.



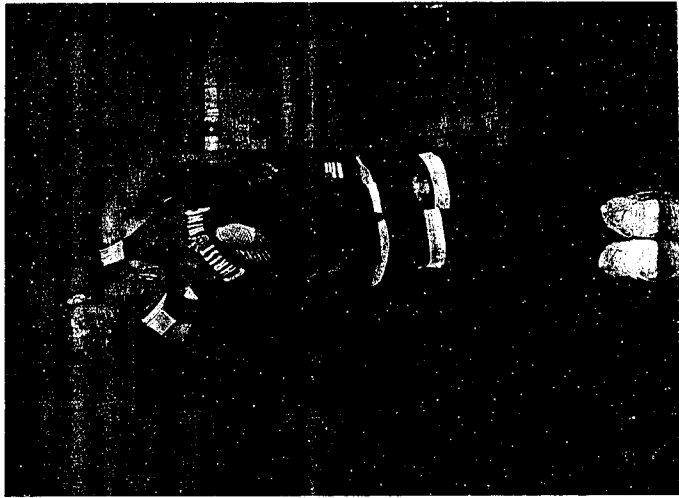
## Adductors

Sit on the floor with the knees bent and the bottom of the feet together. Hold your feet or ankles with your hands and place your elbows on the inside of the thighs. Keeping the back straight, push the legs down while slowly leaning forward.



## Ilitibial Band

While standing up, place the leg to be stretched behind the other leg. Tilt the body to the opposite side of the leg being stretched. Alternate legs after each count of 15 seconds.



## Lower Back A

While sitting up, place the legs just past shoulder width apart with the knees slightly flexed. Grab the ankles and slowly lean forward while keeping the back straight. After 15 seconds release the stretch, and then repeat.



## Lower Back B

Lie on your back and cross your leg over the trunk of your body. Alternate legs after each count of 15 seconds.



## Neck A

Interlock the fingers behind the head and slowly pull the head forward. Hold the stretch for 15 seconds, release, then repeat.



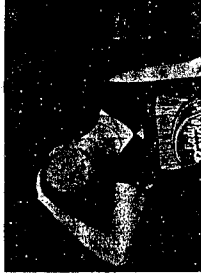
## Neck B

While keeping the shoulders straight grab the right side of the head and pull it slowly to the left. Hold the stretch for 15 seconds, release, then repeat.



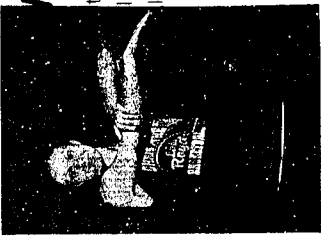
## Neck C

While keeping the shoulders straight grab the left side of the head and pull it to the right. Hold the stretch for 15 seconds, release, then repeat.



## Shoulders A

While standing up straight pull the arm to be stretched across the chest at shoulder level. Grab the elbow and slowly pull the arm across the chest. Alternate arms after each count of 15 seconds.



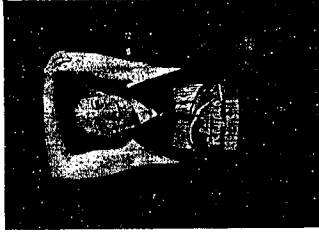
## Shoulders B

While standing up straight, clasp the hands behind the back and slowly lift them up. Hold the stretch for 15 seconds, relax, and then repeat.



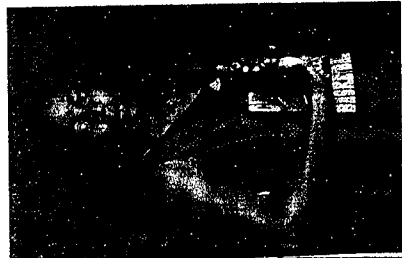
## Shoulders C

While standing up straight bend the arm to be stretched over the head with the hand resting between the shoulder blades. Take the other hand and place it on the elbow of the shoulder being stretched and slowly push down. Alternate arms after each.



## Wrist Flexors

Start with the hand bent up, held with the other hand and the elbow bent. To stretch the muscle, slowly straighten the elbow. Alternate arms after each count of 15 seconds.



## Wrist Extensors

Start with the wrist bent down, held by the other hand and the elbow bent. To stretch the muscle, slowly straighten the elbow. Alternate arms after each count of 15 seconds.

